



## Expressing Images of Women Character in Elizabeth Gaskell Novels

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**Abstract:** This article focused on images of women character in Elizabeth Gaskells works. The author described women in different character. We can find women who played a dominant role in life, and women who was a good housekeeper in Victorian society. Her novels showed us women as a main part of family. In Victorian society women had no any rights to vote or even for studying at universities. Despite of these condition Victorian writers tried to describe women as typical images of Victorian society. One of the women writers was Elizabeth Gaskell.

**Keywords:** Victorian age, image, character, woman, society, novel, typical.

In the past people used to find their roads for reaching their destinations according to the stars in the sky. We may compare the great talented people into those stars. The intellects of the great people help the world to build the good future. Famous people of science, the arts, and literature become leaders of their fields, and identify the possible ways for development. In the history of English literature one of the writers who contributed to the development of it was an English writer Elizabeth Gaskell. It has been almost two centuries and the works of Elizabeth Gaskell still draws the attention of critics, scholars and readers. In 2012 the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Elizabeth Gaskell was widely celebrated. The themes of the writer's novels are different and scholars in their works state the themes as the actual problems. One of those problems is the formation of woman character in Elizabeth Gaskell's novels and their social role in the English society.

The “code” of the main element is woman which is the focus of the following article that derives from the title. The actuality of the topic of women and images of women character in the works of the writer is that there is always interest in exploring women character and in literature it is considered as one of the “attractive” themes. In our point of view there have been different approaches and views in studying women characters in the works of different writers and this states the topic as actual ones.

In modern literature demonstrating the characters structure in Elizabeth Gaskell's works women protagonists and division of classification of women characters in her works, in literature humanistic attitude towards women and the importance of existing cruel society, the complex analyzing of woman character in the works of Elizabeth Gaskell gives the task opportunity to understand well the world of the writer, and together with views about the importance of woman character created by Elizabeth Gaskell makes the topic of the article actual.

The study and analysis of images of woman's world in the writer's works in its turn demonstrates in its English literature and views of English critics on Elizabeth Gaskell.

First time the theme of women images was shortly studied in 1930 Haldane Elizabeth's work “Elizabeth Gaskell and her friends”. This problem drew attention of western scholars during 50-70 of the XX century. Literary critics such as A.Rebenius, R. Colby, D. Deanna, J. Uglow, G.Winifred, A.B.Hopkins, A.Pollard, and P.Stoneman studied Elizabeth Gaskell and her attitude towards family. In 1995 Colby Robin published his work entitled “Some appointed work to do women and vocation in the fiction of Elizabeth Gaskell”. In this study Colby calls Gaskell's some woman who poses a strong

character that is appropriate only to fairy-tale quality of as “Angel” [1.-P.120]. Colby states that they are Angel’s type who is powerful, kind-hearted person by nature. Another critic A.Rebenius considers Colby in Russian them as “mothers – wunderkinds with good qualities”, and believes that this type of women can appear in Gaskell’s novels [7.-P. 36]. An English critic J. Uglow agrees with the views of A.Rebenius and calls them mothers even in tender years [8. -P.92].

This type of character heroines did not appear in Gaskell’s novels suddenly.

In the novels we can see Gaskell’s creativity in heroines of 17 old girls who pose the qualities of “housekeeper”.

If we see kindness and innocence found only in young girls, in heroine Mary, Alice in the novel of “Mary Barton” we can witness devoted to condition of working class towards in factories. In “North and South” this quality feature is changed into devotion towards problem between factory owner and workers.

Gaskell scholars stated that “housekeeper” and working class heroines as the “favorite’ character of author. Images of woman characters showed us humanistic feature of ideal woman. Elizabeth Gaskell rewards her “housekeepers” with best humanistic features as a kind heart, devotion and innocence.

A Russian critic G.Genieva relates the appearance of that type of woman in E. Gaskell’s novels with Victorian age. According to her point of view an ideal woman - considered “angel” of the family, kindness, shyness, gentleness – all these deserve praise, but she is weak in nature, in protective and she needs man’s sponsorship, she does not need freedom, but family is her duty and responsibility[5. –P. 48].

The nuclear of the “housekeeper” or working class girls character is founded by the life of a main heroine and it shows that the life of a main heroine started very early in the novel. We analyze her character through that her fate.

According to critic A. Pollard this type of character is found the Victorian cult of the working class girl [6. –P. 45]. We can observe this type of heroines in the novels of other writers and even the titles of some works express some particular feature of main heroines.

By 1970 the character type that belong to secondary protagonists are now could be found in the heroine of 17 years old Betsy in “North and South” (without considering the rules of existing society the critics). The creation of this type of character in the novel of Elizabeth Gaskell the critics started searching for the different sources of that protagonist.

That there is similarity between images of Margaret and Mary and states that those two protagonists remind the heroes of Ch. Dickens’s. Another critic J.Geoffrey commenting on Betsy says that even her fate in novel finishes with death of “love for life, intelligence not found in child and the age of adolescence”[4. -P. 78] J.Uglow basing on writer’s words “some protagonists’ characters or even images were taken from her daughters” things that Molly is the ideal prototype of her eldest daughter [8. –P. 65].

Not considering the results of investigations scholars views on similarities of characters we can argue the Molly in “Wifes and Daughters” is a new type of character in the works of the writer.(Her growth happens in front of the eyes of the reader) The readers can observe the ways how she growth. While listening to the story of Molly, a reader unconsciously gets interested in Molly’s life. Her black eyes and light brown curly hair remind us to compares her to an angel. The often repetition of phrases such as “slight figure”, “pretty little girl” and comprising of her to a “so very young, so spiritual, so slight and fairy like creature” shown for readers an adolescence girl [3. –P. 202].

Another image of young girl belong to working class is Alice in “Mary Barton”. This young and attractive girl looks like a little housekeeper. She experiences unusual hard life from her early age. There are no people of her age around her as if she lives in the dark house. The atmosphere in her house is dark and silent as the “grave” and we can see unusual, old things everywhere in the room. This exaggerated description of fantastic atmosphere shows the appearance of a new type of woman character. Alice becomes an adult very early. In spite of being young girl she takes responsibility of

taking care of her family and her life. Her will of bringing back her happy moments become stronger when they are looking for a new house. With full of hope and happiness, even without knowing where they are going, they start to work hard in factories. In the novel the factory helps not only to explore the character of the main heroine, but also expresses metaphorically the difficult situation in the life of the main heroine. The factory is described limitless and it symbolizes never ending love of Alice towards her father and it expressed in the following way: I always find a way to be with you, I have found my back to you, in order to find food we work in factories [2. -P. 57].

According to A. Pollard's opinion from the first pages of the novel 'Mary Barton' is lifeless memory statue of Victorian period [6.-P.46].

In our point of view Mary and Alice has witnessed the hardships of a difficult life and as a result in her we can see the formation of working class type character in Betsy: "*we work as we can. We work like a slavery but when it comes to real life we live in a different wolrd*"[2. -P.101]. We could see in the face of there is something in her soul, gentle, open-hearted and patient girl.

In our article the approaches about similarities of images of women character created in the novels written by Elizabeth Gaskell in different years and their inner attitudes shown are demonstrated similar tendencies, which are observed in social function of objects and their general types. From this we can identify the aspects of dividing into the types the characters and the character features which were chosen by the writer. The most important thing is that the great ideology of the writer, the clarity of the specific features of the heroines will be described in relation to their places.

### **The List of used literature**

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